

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02

USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-01

TRSE-00 XMB-04 OPIC-06 CIEP-02 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01

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R 280635Z FEB 75

FM AMCONSUL SYDNEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6084

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMCONSUL PERTH

UNCLAS SYDNEY 0437

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ECON, PFOR, AS

SUBJ: WHITLAM SPEAKS TO SYDNEY BUSINESSMEN

SUMMARY:

IN A SPEECH BEFORE THE SYDNEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE TODAY PRIME MINISTER GOUGH WHITLAM REITERATED HIS SUPPORT FOR A STRONG PRIVATE SECTOR BUT STATED HIS GOVERNMENT BELIEVED IN AN EXTENSION OF THE GOVERNMENT SECTOR AND REDISTRUBUTION OF INCOME.

IN HIS ONLY REFERENCE TO CURRENT GOVERNMENT PROBLEMS, HE SAID THE CONTINUED THREAT OF AN ELECTION WAS A THREAT IN ITSELF TO THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. THE PRIME MINISTER SPOKE BEFORE ABOUT 400 MEMBERS AND GUESTS OF THE SYDNEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WHO RECEIVED HIM POLITELY BUT COOLY. CHAMBER PRESIDENT ALFRED SMITH IN HIS INTRODUCTORY REMARKS CALLED UPON THE LABOR GOVERNMENT FOR MORE COMMUNICATION WITH INDUSTRY AND UNCLASSIFIED

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STATED LABOR GOVERNMENT POLICIES HAD CONTRIBUTED TO

THE CURRENT UNEMPLOYMENT SITUATION AND THE LACK OF
CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT.

2. WHITLAM POINTED OUT HE HAD BEEN A SUPPORTER OF
PRIVATE INDUSTRY SINCE BECOMING THE LEADER OF THE
LABOR PARTY AND QUOTED REMARKS MADE SEVEN YEARS AGO,
POINTING OUT HIS STRONG SUPPORT FOR INDUSTRY AND SAID
OVER THE YEARS HIS VIEWS HAD NEVER CHANGED. HE SAID
THERE WAS INTER-DEPENDENCE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND
BUSINESS AND ALTHOUGH THERE WERE PREDICTIONS OF A
SLOWDOWN IN AUSTRALIAN GROWTH, THIS YEAR WOULD SHOW
A GROWTH RATE OF 7 PERCENT.

3. MR. WHITLAM ADMITTED THERE HAD BEEN A CHANGE OF
EMPHASIS IN SUPPORT OF PRIVATE BUSINESS BUT THE GOVERNMENT
FOUND IT MUST ADJUST ITSELF TO A 2-YEAR BUSINESS CYCLE
VERSUS A 5 TO 7-YEAR CYCLE OF A FEW YEARS AGO. HE SAID
HIS GOVERNMENT DOES NOT WANT TO NATIONALIZE ANYTHING
BUT WANTED MORE GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION AND BELIEVED
IN A MIXED PRIVATE/GOVERNMENT ECONOMY. WHITLAM SAID
HE BELIEVES IN EXTENSION OF GOVERNMENT INTO NATURAL
RESOURCES AND OTHER TRADITIONAL PRIVATE BUSINESS SECTORS
AND A REDISTRIBUTION OF INCOME.

4. WHITLAM WENT TO GREAT LENGTHS TO POINT OUT DURING
THE LAST GENERAL ELECTION IN MAY, 1974 THERE WAS NO
GOVERNMENT FOR THREE MONTHS, SINCE DURING THE ELECTION
PERIOD AND AFTER, PARLIAMENT DID NOT MEET. HE SAID
THE ELECTION RESULTS AND THE ACTIONS OF THE OPPOSITION
DURING THIS PERIOD WERE DAMAGING TO AUSTRALIA AND ITS
IMAGE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. HE QUESTIONED HOW LONG A
DEMOCRACY CAN EXIST IN AUSTRALIA IN VIEW OF THE
DISRUPTIONS CAUSED BY PEOPLE CHALLENGING THE GOVERNMENT.
HE ALSO QUESTIONS HOW LONG BUSINESS CAN LAST IF
AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY WAS CONTINUALLY BEING CHALLENGED.

5. WHITLAM SUMMED UP BY GIVING REASSURANCE
HIS GOVERNMENT IS SYMPATHETIC TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR
AND THE LABOR GOVERNMENT IS FLEXIBLE TOWARDS
PRIVATE INDUSTRY IN THEIR POLICIES.
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6. COMMENT:
PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM WAS IN A SOMBER AND SUBDUED MOOD
AND HIS TALK WAS SINGULARLY LACKING IN HUMOUR.
PREDICTABLY, HIS AUDIENCE WAS COOL, INTERRUPTING HIM
ONLY ONCE WITH APPLAUSE ON HIS REFERENCE TO THE NEED
OF COOPERATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS. EXCEPT
FOR REFERENCE TO THE THREAT TO DEMOCRACY OF

CHALLENGES TO HIS GOVERNMENT, HE MADE NO REFERENCE TO
THE CURRENT DIFFICULTIES OF THE LABOR GOVERNMENT AND
DID NOT EXPOSE HIMSELF TO QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE
NOR FROM REPORTERS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE, SPEECHES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SYDNEY00437
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750070-0970
From: SYDNEY
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975021/aaaaaamr.tel
Line Count: 120
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29 MAY 2003 by BrownAM>; APPROVED <14 JAN 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: WHITLAM SPEAKS TO SYDNEY BUSINESSMEN SUMMARY
TAGS: ECON, PFOR, AS, (WHITLAM, E GOUGH)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006